

**IN THE CLAIMS:**

The following is a complete listing of the claims in this application, reflects all changes currently being made to the claims, and replaces all earlier versions and all earlier listings of the claims:

Claim 1. (currently amended): An image reading apparatus, connected to a plurality of external printing apparatuses via a network, said image reading apparatus comprising:

generation means for reading an image and generating an image signal;

selection means for selecting one from the plurality external printing apparatuses;

determination means for determining whether user management information is needed or not by asking the selected external printing apparatus whether input of the user management information by a user is needed or not whether or not the selected external printing apparatus needs input of user management information;

input control means for controlling the input of the user management information so as to be inputted, when the result of the determination indicates affirmative, and so as not to be inputted when the result of the determination indicates negative;

output means for outputting the inputted user management information to the selected external printing apparatus;

reception means for receiving, from the selected external printing apparatus, availability information indicating whether or not the using of the selected external printing

apparatus is allowed, wherein the availability information is determined based on the output of the user management information; and

transmission control means for controlling transmission such that the generated image signal is transmitted to the selected external printing apparatus, when the availability information indicates affirmative.

Claim 2. (previously presented): An image reading apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said transmission control means compresses the image signal prior to transmitting the image signal.

Claims 3 - 5. (canceled)

Claim 6. (currently amended): An image reading method for controlling an image reading apparatus, connected to a plurality of external printing apparatuses via a network, said image reading method comprising the steps of:

reading an image and generating an image signal on the basis of reading the image;

selecting one from the plurality of external printing apparatuses;

determining whether user management information is needed or not by asking the selected external printing apparatus whether input of the user management information by a user is needed or not whether or not the selected external printing apparatus needs input of user management information;

controlling the input of the user management information so as to be inputted when the result of the determination made in said determining step indicates affirmative, and so as not to be inputted when the result of the determination indicates negative;

outputting the inputted user management information to the selected external printing apparatus;

receiving from the selected external printing apparatus, availability information indicating whether or not the using of the selected external printing apparatus is allowed, wherein the availability information is determined based on the output of the user management information; and

controlling transmission such that the generated image signal is transmitted to the selected external printing apparatus, when the availability information indicates affirmative.

Claim 7. (previously presented): An image reading method according to Claim 6, wherein said control step includes compressing the image signal prior to transmitting the image signal.

Claims 8 - 14. (canceled)

Claim 15. (currently amended): A computer readable memory storing a program executing an image reading method for controlling an image reading apparatus, connected to a plurality of external printing apparatuses via a network, said program comprising:

code for reading an image and generating an image signal on the basis of reading the image;

code for selecting one from the plurality external printing apparatuses;

code for determining whether user management information is needed or not by asking the selected external printing apparatus whether input of the user management information by a user is needed or not whether or not the selected external printing apparatus needs input of user management information;

code for controlling the input of the user management information so as to be inputted when the result of the determination made by said code for said determining step indicates affirmative, and so as not to be inputted when the result of the determination indicates negative;

code for outputting the inputted user management information to the selected external printing apparatus;

code for receiving from the selected external printing apparatus, availability information indicating whether or not the using of the selected external printing apparatus is allowed, wherein the availability information is determined based on the output of the user management information; and

code for controlling transmission such that the generated image signal is transmitted to the selected external printing apparatus, when the availability information indicates affirmative.

Claim 16. (previously presented): A computer readable memory according to Claim 15, wherein said control code compresses the image signal prior to transmitting the image signal.

Claims 17 - 25. (canceled)

Claim 26. (previously presented): An apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said selection means selects the external printing apparatus according to the generated image signal.

Claim 27. (previously presented): An apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the management information relating to a user includes at least one of a user ID, a division ID, or a title ID for the authentication determination at the selected external printing apparatus.

Claim 28 - 33. (canceled)